

**State of California
Awards for Innovation in Higher Education**

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Los Angeles Pierce College
Los Angeles Unified School District
California State University, Northridge

Abstract.

Los Angeles Pierce College (LAPC) is a Hispanic Serving Institution with statewide recognition for academic achievement. LAPC is among the top 10 colleges for transfers to a CSU and the top 15% for transfer to a UC. However, in the STEM fields, Hispanic and low-income students are struggling. STEM data reveals less than 90% of Hispanic and low-income students are prepared for transfer-level math and English courses. These students are not completing STEM courses and are prolonging transfer and degree attainment due to various factors such as financial limitations, lack of college readiness, and a general lack of knowledge of student support services. With this grant, LAPC will solidify a collaborative effort called *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* (Paths to New Horizons in STEM) with Los Angeles Unified School District, CSU Northridge, and other transfer institutions to improve college readiness, retention, completion, transfer, and financial and academic support for Hispanic and low-income students.


To achieve this objective, *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* proposes to implement three major strategies that align with State priorities: (1) to strengthen STEM curriculum and instruction, (2) to increase and accelerate STEM degree completions and transfers, and (3) to mitigate financial burden for students through the implementation of effective instructional and support services. The innovation grant's assessment and evaluation processes will allow the *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* local educational institutions to identify and institutionalize new best practices and methodologies derived from these strategies to increase student success for Hispanic and low-income students in STEM.

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Assurance and Signature.

"I assure that I have read and support this application. I understand that, if this application is chosen for an award, Los Angeles Pierce College will serve as the fiscal agent for the award and that the responsibility of the fiscal agent includes distribution of funds to any other participants in the application pursuant to any agreement between the participants. I also understand that, if this application is chosen for an award, the Committee on Awards for Innovation in Higher Education may request submittal of reports or other information."



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Section B - Question 1 (The Problem)

The problem is significant. Hispanic and low-income students at Los Angeles Pierce College (LAPC) are struggling to achieve academic success in critical STEM fields. Of the Hispanic and low-income, full-time STEM-degree students from the 2012 cohort, only 11.76% earned a STEM degree in two years; 29.41% in three. For key gateway courses in biology, chemistry, environmental science, geology, and math, Hispanic student success rates are roughly 6% lower than the college average of 62%. Additionally, less than 36% of declared STEM majors identify as Hispanic despite this group comprising 49% of the student body at LAPC. The need to outreach and ignite a passion in STEM among Hispanics is evident.

Given that LAPC is a commuter institution with large percentage of part-time students, the following charts provide an additional picture of the need. With a population of over 20,000 students, overall STEM declaration and Hispanic student degree completions are low. With most science courses requiring a math prerequisite, it is a significant problem that less than 10% of Hispanic students who enter Los Angeles Pierce College are prepared for transfer-level mathematics. As a result, student debt increases due to students enrolling in remedial courses below college level, prolonging graduation and transfer. The need to improve math placement assessment and preparation, and increase degree and certificate attainment, is clear.

Pierce College Hispanic Two-Year Degree Awards				
2012-2015				
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Total Degrees (AA, AA-T/AS, AS-T)	364	446	556	660
STEM Degrees Awarded	60	57	72	81

Student Math Placement, Fall 2015								
Math Course	Hisp	%	Asian	%	Black	%	White	%
Below Colg. Level	791	62.28%	121	41.44%	107	67.72%	416	50.18%
College Level	353	27.80%	90	30.82%	36	22.78%	221	26.66%
Transfer Level+	126	9.92%	81	27.74%	15	9.49%	192	23.16%
TOTAL	1270	100	292	100	158	100	829	100

Section B – Question 2 (The Innovation)

The proposed project design is manifold and shall incorporate the development of new curriculum, embedded tutoring, counseling, math and English assessment preparation, and student service programs designed to improve academic success. These components are designed to work in concert to promote student success and STEM engagement for Hispanic and other historically underrepresented students so that their STEM success rates and declared majors align with the college average. These efforts also align with the State Priorities:

Component 1: Strengthening STEM Curriculum and Instruction

Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes shall develop and offer pre-collegiate bridge courses in biology, chemistry, and physics to meet the needs of underprepared and limited English speaking students. Pre-collegiate English and Math classes designed for remedial learners and ESL students already benefit roughly 90% of Hispanic students at LAPC, however, these courses have no parallel in the sciences. Unlike the transfer-level gateway courses in Biology, Chemistry, and Physics, these custom classes would not have a math prerequisite. In addition to being offered during the fall and spring semesters, these courses can be offered in the summer and serve as the foundation for a STEM boot camp for first-year students. This will help retain and move students rapidly into core STEM courses, positioning them for student success and engendering a desire for completion.

Hispanic and low-income students enrolling in critical STEM courses at LAPC will also receive support through Supplemental Instruction (SI). STEM SI will target gateway courses where students experience significant challenges. It will consist of embedded SI tutors who have previously passed the targeted course with an “A” and have been recommended by STEM faculty members. These tutors will attend and take notes at all lectures, read all assigned materials, and meet weekly with the course instructor to discuss session concepts. They will also be expected to facilitate weekly SI review sessions with students.

Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes will also provide support to key STEM faculty who wish to pursue professional development opportunities that will improve their confidence and effectiveness in dealing with student under-preparedness and their other non-academic needs. Priority considerations will be given to professional development opportunities that focus on cross-cultural pedagogy and best practices for culturally responsive teaching. The aim is to help STEM instructors increase pedagogical effectiveness and awareness with minority and low-income students.

Component 2: Increasing and Accelerating STEM Degree Completions and Transfers

Of course, pursuing a STEM major means not only following a very rigorous and challenging course of study, but also navigating a complex array of transfer options. Thus, strong counseling support is essential. STEM counseling services, which involve individuals who have specific academic discipline area knowledge and specialized STEM career knowledge, including undergraduate internship and research pathways, will be enhanced to offer robust

counseling to help students navigate through complex and rigorous STEM academic and career options. STEM counselors will also provide and monitor student Education Plans.

High school and community outreach are also critical to ensuring students get through STEM pathways and transfer as quickly and efficiently as possible. The college shall establish partnerships with local high schools to develop new policies and practices that require schools to provide data on STEM students reflecting how many students plan to transition to LAPC and their education and STEM career pathway goals. The objective is to provide support to STEAM students and foster seamless transition into LAPC STEM programs and courses. This includes outreach and information campaign activities in STEM with integrated services for feeder schools (which serve predominantly Hispanic students) to ignite and sustain an early passion in STEM. It also includes increasing STEM articulation agreements and developing STEM pathway sequence charts to provide students a seamless transition from high school to LAPC and onto four-year universities. Lastly, it shall include informational presentations and workshops to parents of students from key feeder schools with large populations of Hispanic students, to help parents view a STEM career for their child as a realistic and attainable goal.

Another important Outreach effort is assessment preparation. As part of the informational campaign to address low placement levels for Hispanic students, LAPC will familiarize students with the format of the Mathematics Diagnostic Testing Project (MDTP) Math Assessment prior to taking the placement test. An information campaign will be launched via local high schools, the LAPC website, Admissions and Records, Counseling and Assessment offices. Practice time will be given on self-access online practice tests to give students an opportunity to boost their skills prior to taking a placement test.

Lastly, *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* will also offer support to LAPC's veteran students who wish to pursue STEM degrees or transfers. Over two-thirds of LAPC's veteran population who major in STEM disciplines identify as Hispanic. Many of these veterans are discharged after serving in positions related to technology, such as networks and information systems. Veterans who declare STEM majors will be provided support to challenge classes and take competency-based exams for course credit, allowing them to expedite their transfer or degree attainment in STEM fields such as Computer Science or Engineering.

Component 3: Mitigating Financial Burden and Increasing Support for Students

While these efforts will assist in relieving student costs in the long run by improving retention and completion, other efforts will be made to mitigate costs to the student and the State. *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* shall purchase textbooks for core STEM classes and provide a lending library to low-income students. Students will also gain access to laptops and course software both for field work and in the classroom. Such a program will reduce student debt by offsetting cost for books, software, and supplies.

In addition to informing students about financial aid assistance and guidelines, *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* will conduct financial literacy workshops for STEM students. These workshops will not only teach fiscal responsibility to students, but also provide them with the knowledge they need to apply for financial aid, state and national scholarships, and other forms of support available through the Pierce College Foundation.

Section B – Question 3 (Implementation)

This will be the first project of its kind at Los Angeles Pierce College, particularly with regard to the implementation of pre-collegiate bridge science courses. Project implementation will involve a number of parties working together on a tight timeline. The college will need to coordinate outreach activities and articulation agreements with Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) feeder high schools. Meetings will be conducted with feeder high school faculty, counselors and principals to develop implementation strategies to ensure shared governance and meeting program goals. Outreach will expand efforts by utilizing its recruitment coordinator and support team to work collaboratively with feeder high schools to enroll students into college and assessment preparatory activities.

Organizations

The college already has approval to recruit STEAM students from feeder school William H. Taft Charter High School, which developed a STEAM Magnet program beginning 2016-2017 fiscal year. *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* will also target local feeder high schools with which it already has established relations, such as Canoga Park, Chatsworth, Birmingham, Reseda, and Granada Hills High Schools. The goal is to strengthen STEM pathways with these schools. Students recruited from these high schools will have the option to participate in a summer STEM boot camp and receive priority registration, in addition to the other student services supported by the project.

The college can also work on improving and expanding its existing relationship with its local four-year university, California State University, Northridge. The college is already engaged in several projects with CSUN directed at creating articulation agreements in STEM departments, promoting student interest in STEM research, and increasing and accelerating transfers into STEM programs. This project will ultimately support and expand upon these preexisting relations with CSUN.

Implementation Risks

Implementation risks are foreseen due to the impact of student retention. The persistence of students results in accruing additional tuition and textbook costs. The textbook lending library and financial literacy workshops proposed are intended to mitigate that risk. Professional development opportunities for STEM instructors to refine their cross-cultural pedagogical skills will also help mitigate the risk of attrition.

Los Angeles Pierce College is familiar with these implementation risks and has expertise and policies in place to mitigate them. The college has engaged in successful efforts in building programs and practices with local high schools. Efforts consist of outreach and recruitment, concurrent enrollment, articulation, career and academic counseling, enrollment, and college transition.

Additionally, the Pierce College Foundation has the capacity to accept and disburse financial scholarship awards to students and other universities in alignment with program goals.

Timeline

While some implementation activities can begin in the Spring semester of Year 1, such as the embedded tutoring, parent outreach, and math assessment preparation, other implementation activities such as student orientations and the offering of the pre-collegiate bridge courses will not be fully implemented until Year 2. Starting in Year 3, an evaluator will work with LAPC's Institutional Research team to begin assessing and identifying best practices gleaned from data on declared STEM majors and Hispanic student success rates in core STEM courses.

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Section B – Question 4 (Alignment)

Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes aligns with other efforts that Los Angeles Pierce College is undertaking regionally and statewide. LAPC established a Student Success and Support Program (SSSP) model that provides structure to how success is measured by the attainment of students' stated education goals or objectives. The SSSP model provides five measurements: Assessment, Orientation, Counseling and Advisement, Follow-up, and Matriculation Exemptions. This SSSP policy provides a cohesive approach that nurtures student completion. The State of California and California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office mandates these services for all community colleges.

LAPC implemented Algebra Success at Pierce (ASAP) program which provides students an opportunity to pass both math 115 (elementary algebra) and Math 125 (intermediate algebra) in one semester. Accelerated Precalculus and Trigonometry (APT) was also implemented to provide students an opportunity to pass both Math 240 and Math 260 in one semester.

LAPC also developed AA-T and AS-T degree for transfer. Earning the AA-T or AS-T provides a number of benefits for students planning to transfer to the California State University (CSU) system. Benefits include guaranteed admission into the CSU system, a 60 (LAPC) + 60 (CSU) unit pathway to CSU graduation, and GE and Major Prep courses that are transferable to *any* CSU campus.

LAPC is also already the sub-recipient of several STEM grants through its partner school, California State University, Northridge. One of these collaborations, Bridging the Gap, provides embedded tutoring for core Engineering and Physics courses. Another CSUN collaboration, *Abriendo Caminos*, supports Hispanic, low-income, and first generation students who pursue degrees in Business, Nursing, and Engineering. CSUN Build Podor supports students who transfer into health and science programs at CSUN. Lastly, CSUN Re-C² is a program that promotes student interest in pursuing math research at CSUN.

The college has also implemented the Department of Education California Career Pathways Trust (CCPT) grant into its Career and Technical Education programs. This project provides students with a course sequenced pathway of integrated academic and career-based education and training, aligned to current or emerging regional economic needs. Career pathway programs are designed to lead students to a postsecondary degree or certification in a high-skill, high-wage, and high-growth field. The college manages \$2,000,000 dollars of the CCPT which services six feeder schools and LAPC students within eight emerging sector pathways such as computer science, engineering, graphic design, media arts, and computer numerical control (CNC).

Lastly, a recent Districtwide initiative known as The Promise has committed the LACCD to providing L.A. county students with a free year of community college at any of its campuses.

Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes aligns with the aforementioned efforts due to its focus on supporting course and degree completion and transfer efforts. LAPC is focused on improving student completion and reducing the achievement gap among underrepresented students. This innovation builds on these established efforts by identifying students who are Hispanic, underrepresents or low-income and integrating them into the project with the college's Student Equity Plan and its established goals, objectives, and activities.

Section B – Question 5 (Scalability and Replicability)

By focusing on proven research methods and outreach to students, *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* is based on effective practices. As shown by the research presented in the subsequent evidence section, the use of a multiple intervention design approach meets the academic and affective needs of minority and low-income students. Instead of choosing one solution, which will not support every student, Los Angeles Pierce College is implementing a multi-pronged approach to reach more students and provide ongoing support from pre-enrollment to graduation.

Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes will be scaled up by implementing an oversight structure. First, LAPC will hire independent external evaluators to assess best practices. It is imperative to utilize data to reveal student success trends. Evaluators will examine quantitative data and qualitative information consisting of: degree completion and transfer rates, innovation plans, quarterly reports, student and faculty feedback, completion and students success rates, and surveys from student engagement managers.

Data collected will be propagated throughout college and high schools as a case study to be analyzed by a focus group and an Innovation Committee. The *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* Innovation Committee will be responsible for addressing and ensuring state mandates for student success are followed, and communicating findings to shared governance committees responsible for institutionalizing and sustaining best practices in student success. Utilization of multiple data sources such as the Research and Planning Group for California Community College (RP group) and the college's Office of Institutional Effectiveness will offer an overall quantitative view of student progression.

This data will be used to scale *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* within the college by supporting the institutionalization of the proposed bridge science courses that will initially be supported by project funding. It will also be used to inform best practices for developing STEM pathways between high schools, community colleges, and transfer institutions. To this end, the data will be shared with administrations at local feeder high schools, local four-year universities, as well as with shared governance committees at the college.

Furthermore, best practices derived from *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* can be replicated widely in California by developing a professional development training for college faculty and staff aiming to increase course completion and degree attainment for their underrepresented and low-income students. The professional development training will use the results of the *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* case study to teach instructors strategies to utilize existing student support services at each college to increase STEM engagement and student success for Hispanic and low-income students.

Additionally, workshops can be offered at the RP Group, the Association for Intuition Research (AIR), the California Association for Intuition Research (CAIR), and similar conferences to ensure that the data collection and assessment activities of *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* can be replicated, validated, and implemented at other institutions of higher education as appropriate. This will support enhanced collaborative efforts between institutional research departments across the state for producing aggregated statewide data on the effectiveness of the strategies employed by *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes*.

Section B – Question 6 (Evidence)

Hispanics graduate from high school without extensive science enrichment activities. Under-representation in science and advanced math curriculum has serious implications for Hispanics' postsecondary opportunities and for careers in math and science-based fields.¹

The need to strengthen outreach, assessment preparation, and to establish bridge courses in the sciences is supported and substantiated by extensive research literature. The proposed outreach activities for Hispanic and low-income high school students and their parents is consistent with research on best practices for STEM outreach and student success.² Intensive skills review before assessment testing is also demonstrated to help students move ahead quickly.³ Evidence also supports the use of supplemental instruction in gateway courses where students experience significant challenges.⁴ ⁵ Research also supports academic and counseling support as essential to student success.⁶ Finally, student-faculty engagement, as would be integrated into the proposed summer bridge program, is a reliable predictor of Hispanic student persistence.⁷ ⁸ ⁹ Maintaining and developing articulation agreements has also proven to be an essential strategy to student success in transfer.¹⁰

Additionally, these proposed strategies align with the recommendations of STEM faculty at LAPC. *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* is also in alignment with the state recognized Student Success and Support Program (SSSP) and SB 860 Student Equity plans. The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) commended LAPC for its student success efforts and ability to undertake initiatives such as those proposed in this project.

¹ Chavez, Lisa. "Access to Advanced Math for Latino High School Students.." PDF. 2008-04-22 http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p109858_index.html

² Packard, B. W. L. (2012). Effective outreach, recruitment, and mentoring into STEM pathways: Strengthening partnerships with community colleges. *Community Colleges in the Evolving STEM Education Landscape: Summary of a Summit*.

³ Melguizo, T., Bos J., Prather G. Is Developmental Education Helping Community College Students Persist? A Critical Review of the Literature. *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 55, 2: pp. 173-184 (2011)

⁴ Rabitoy, E. R., Hoffman, J. L., & Person, D. R. (2015). Supplemental Instruction: The Effect of Demographic and Academic Preparation Variables on Community College Student Academic Achievement in STEM-Related Fields. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 1-16.

⁵ Meling, V. B., Mundy, M. A., Kupczynski, L., & Green, M. E. (2013). Supplemental instruction and academic success and retention in science courses at a Hispanic-serving institution. *World Journal of Education*, 3(3), 11.

⁶ Tovar, E. (2015). The Role of Faculty, Counselors, and Support Programs on Latino/a Community College Students' Success and Intent to Persist. *Community College Review*, 43(1), 46-71.

⁷ Cejda, B.D., and R.E. Hoover. 2011 2010. "Strategies for Faculty-Student Engagement: How Community College Faculty Engage Latino Students." *Journal of College Student Retention* 12:2, 135–153.

⁸ Andrews, E. July 1, 2013. "College Success: An Exploratory Study of How Underrepresented Minority Students Enter and Persist in STEM Programs." <http://repository.unm.edu/handle/1928/23079>.

⁹ Keim, J., J.C. McDermott, and M.R. Gerard. 2010. "A Community College Bridge Program: Utilizing a Group Format to Promote Transitions for Hispanic Students." *Community College Journal of Research and Practice* 34:10.

¹⁰ Kisker, C. Creating and Sustaining Community College—University Transfer Partnerships. *Community College Review*, vol. 34, 4: pp. 282-301 (2007)

Section B – Question 7 (Assessment)

The success of *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* is measured by data collected prior to implementation and throughout the project. Collaboration efforts supporting assessment include external evaluators and LAPC's Office of Institutional Research. Assessment and data collection for *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* will center on course completion, retention, degree and certificate attainment, math and English placement and completion, transfer rates, faculty feedback, student education plans (SEP), student pre/post STEM surveys, demographics, course enrollment, student progression, low-income and financial aid status, and declared majors.

The *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* team and external evaluator will utilize Cal-PASS Plus to access data. Cal-PASS Plus is a K-16 resource for certificates, degrees, college readiness, employment and completion. LAPC utilizes Cal-PASS Plus as a resource for the California Career Pathways Trust projects.

Specifically, the data sources above will be used to track whether there is a significant increase in STEM engagement among Hispanic and low-income students. In this context, STEM engagement will be measured by data on enrollments and declared STEM majors. Student success rates will be assessed through completion and retention data in key STEM courses. The expectation is that *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* will help Hispanic and low-income success rates and STEM enrollments close the gap to align with the college population at large. The data is expected to reveal a correlation between enrollments in the science bridge courses and higher student success rates. Similar correlations are expected to be found between success rates and students who are the recipients of embedded tutoring services, assessment preparatory support, student education plans, and textbook lending and technology support. We expect there will be a correlation between these activities and improved transfer rates and degree completions.

Additionally, a new process will be implemented in which qualitative surveys are distributed to students and faculty who participate in or benefit from *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes*. The personalized and anecdotal information generated from qualitative research will be used to augment the hard data and get a more complete picture of the successes and shortcomings of the project.

Utilizing these quantitative and qualitative data sources will allow *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* to better serve students by expanding research boundaries. *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* will enable the college to analyze data and best practices from students' point of entry into STEM courses through completion and transfer. This assessment and evaluation process will influence systemic change within STEM departments and the college at large by improving support services and instruction. These improvements will be based on research findings and can be used by STEM and Student Services departments at LAPC and its feeder and transfer institutions as appropriate.

Section B – Question 8 (Sustainability)

Los Angeles Pierce College has incorporated planning processes that include the campus community, industry partnerships, secondary institutions, universities, and business partners to ensure stakeholders are involved in dialogue centering on student success. LAPC has a governance structure that engages a variety of committees in ongoing efforts to improve and uphold the college's Strategic Master Plan in support of student success. Some of these committees include the College Outcomes Committee (COC), College Planning Committee (CPC), Curriculum Committee (CC), Budget Committee (BC), Student Success Committee (SSC), and Accreditation Steering Committee (ASC). Together, this body of committees ensure constant improvement to institutional effectiveness and student success in a sustainable manner. These committees work in concert to oversee the assessment and reporting of student learning outcomes, service area outcomes, and program outcomes, and integrate these assessments into the college's overall planning efforts. These committees will be instrumental to institutionalizing and sustaining *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* activities whose effectiveness is supported by the research.

The *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* leadership team has over six decades of combined experience and knowledge within higher education, not including the dozens of professors, administrators, staff, and college personnel expected to participate. The team is highly committed to supporting and sustaining innovation activities long-term. The team's partnerships with the Student Success Initiative, SSSP, Student Equity, and Academic Affairs will safeguard project stability and ensure the provision of new team members in case there are changes in leadership. In addition, STEM faculty, the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and Students Services, and the President's Office will be an additional reassurance for long-term sustainability through their knowledge of plans and goals throughout the life of the project and beyond.

The grants department and STEM faculty that will comprise the *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* team already work closely with the Office of Institutional Research at LAPC. Research gathered will support future grant applications to further improve and expand services and student success. Data from *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* will be used to modify and improve college services by determining best practices in pedagogy, counseling, outreach, financial assistance/debt prevention, curriculum development, and tutoring. Throughout the life of the grant, hard data and qualitative feedback will be reviewed with the shared governance structure to ensure best practices will become the norm throughout the progression and implementation of *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* activities. Additionally, categorical funding through Student Equity and SSSP will be available to sustain *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes* programs and expand their reach to other underrepresented groups with demonstrated achievement gaps. In this way, LAPC will institutionalize new and more effective ways to serve Hispanic, low-income, and other historically underrepresented students as determined by the outcomes of *Caminos a Nuevos Horizontes*.